

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 24, 2018

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

In 2016, about 19 million U.S. adults over the age of 18 struggled with substance use disorder, according to the national Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This disorder is a product of recurrent use of alcohol and drugs resulting in significant impairments that affect a person's ability to meet his or her responsibilities in the various spheres of life, including work. According to SAMHSA's data, a substantial proportion of adults with this disorder—more than 40 percent—work part-time or less. Researchers have found that unemployment can contribute to an on-going struggle with substance use disorder, and vice versa.

Furthermore, the use of substances can prevent a person from getting temporary assistance while being unemployed. Specifically, the *Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act* permits states to test claimants for the use of controlled substances as a condition of eligibility for Unemployment Insurance if the claimants lost their most recent employment due to the use of these substances, or if their particular line of work conducts regular drug testing. However, SAMHSA-sponsored grant projects have shown that employment can play an important role in helping people recover from substance use disorder by, among other things, providing them with structure and concrete goals contributing to a greater sense of purpose.

Congress has encouraged the integration of federally-funded services to assist jobseekers and employers through the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA). The law requires that states, regions and local areas actively develop plans to meet their specific workforce needs. Communities that are disproportionately helping people struggling with substance use disorder may face particularly difficult challenges in planning to meet these needs.

With this in mind, we are asking that GAO review how WIOA-funded programs are being used to support efforts to help people with substance use disorder gain employment, with a specific focus on the following areas:

- What plans have states, regions and local areas made to serve the career-specific education and employment needs of communities disproportionately affected by substance use disorder through WIOA-funded services?

- For selected communities, how are WIOA funds being used to provide career-specific education and employment services to people with substance use disorder? What is currently known about the outcomes of these services?
- How can federal agencies, including the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services, work together to support the employment and career-specific education needs of communities disproportionately affected by this disorder?

Thank you for your attention to this request. If you have any questions, please contact Elaina Murphy (elaina.murphy@mail.house.gov) with Congressman Guthrie's office at (202) 225-3501 and Jonas Linde (jonas.linde@mail.house.gov) with the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

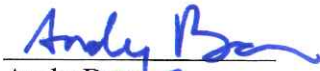
Sincerely,



Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education
and the Workforce



Brett Guthrie
Chairman
Subcommittee on Higher Education
and Workforce Development



Andy Barr
Member of Congress